

POLITICAL PROSPECTS IN IRAN

Prime Minister Mossadeq's cabinet decree of 25 July provides for a popular vote on whether or not the present Majlis, the Iranian parliament, is to be dissolved. In his nationwide radio address on 27 July, the prime minister told the people that they must choose between him and the moribund Majlis.

25X1 the referendum is to be held soon, possibly as early as 5 August.

In taking this proposed action, which is illegal since only the shah has the constitutional right to dissolve the Majlis, the prime minister will have the full support of the Iranian Communists, the Tudeh party, and its apparatus. The Tudeh has campaigned against the present Majlis and accuses it of being a tool of the imperialistic West. Thus, the prime minister is assured of its support on this issue.

By conducting the nonsecret ballot provided for in Mossadeq's decree, his henchmen, supported by the security forces, will be

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in a position to exert direct influence on the voters.

Accordingly, there is little doubt that such a referendum will approve the dissolution of the present Majlis.

What may be expected thereafter? Since Mossadeq is currently operating under virtual dictatorial powers voted him by the Majlis last spring--powers which will not expire until January 1954--he is in a position to rule alone. He has, however, so far apparently been sufficiently unsure of himself to desire that the Majlis share the responsibility for his decisions. New elections can accordingly be anticipated.

Rigged elections are traditionally standard practice in Iran, and normally several months are needed to conduct the actual balloting. During the last elections for Majlis seats, the Mossadeq government used both legal and illegal means to ensure the election of its candidates.

The present situation offers unique angles, however, and Mossadeq may not be able to secure a new Majlis which will be

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more amenable than the present one. While the Communists will support him in the referendum, in a Majlis election it will probably put up its own candidates. In view of the overwhelming Tudeh demonstration in Tehran on 21 July, some of its candidates would be successful there. In other cities, such as Isfahan, it might also be successful. Tudeh candidates would probably represent Communist-front groups; they might even be disguised and run under Mossadeq's banner. In districts where Tudeh strength is weak, its support would be thrown directly to Mossadeq in order to defeat his opposition.

The prime minister also faces considerable moderate and rightist opposition grouped loosely around the shah and the royal court. Tribal chiefs, army officers, the landed gentry, and religious fanatics under the control of Mullah Kashani might, if they were united, defeat Mossadeq. In the rural districts they can hardly be denied, and their candidates can only be defeated through wholesale terrorism.

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Under any circumstances, several months will elapse before a Majlis can be returned to office. During this time the prime minister must carry on alone.

The next Majlis, if and when it is ultimately assembled, gives no promise of solving Mossadeq's problems. He may manipulate a somewhat larger group, but will have difficulty in eliminating his conservative and rightist opposition. He will probably find a compact and determined Tudeh bloc facing him, ready to support his anti-Western policies, prodding him on to more extremist action, and awaiting the day when they can take over. Tudeh representation in a Mossadeq cabinet is not an impossibility.

Mossadeq has been recently reported as undecided and extremely nervous, but, on another occasion, as convinced that the people will support him fully. Mossadeq's personal appeal and his almost miraculous ability to recoup should not be overlooked; on the other hand, Tudeh is the only political party in Iran which has a sense of purpose and a clear doctrine to offer.

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commenting on the 21 July Tudeh demonstrations, the prime
minister stated: "You cannot crush the will of the people--
look at what happened in China."